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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Rate Increases For Early Education And Care Programs

Department of Early Education and Care will also increase access to child care for low-income families

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced a 6 percent rate increase for all early education programs that provide care for low-income families, worth \$28.6 million, which represents the largest rate hike for subsidized early education and care programs in 10 years.

The Administration also plans to reinvest an additional \$9.3 million on an annual basis to provide further rate hikes to some infant and toddler care providers to ensure they are paid the median reimbursement rate.

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) will also increase access to child care - serving approximately 1,100 more children during FY'18 - by reissuing vouchers from families that no longer need subsidized care during the year, which would have gone unused otherwise.

The significant investment in rate increases will support early educator salaries and benefits at early education and care programs in order to improve hiring and retention issues faced by programs that serve families receiving state subsidies.

Along with the rate increases, EEC plans to ensure income-eligible children receive access to at least 12 months of continuous care, regardless of changes in family status.

"We are pleased to work with the Legislature to provide these rate increases for providers who care and educate our youngest residents," said **Governor Charlie Baker**. "It is vital for these

programs to be able to train and retain experienced staff, and these rates increases will help them accomplish that important aspect of any high-quality child care program.”

“This significant investment will ensure our state’s early education and care programs are able to pay good teachers more, and help improve the quality of programs by maintaining continuity of staff,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.**

The rate increases depend on legislative approval to move available funding from Fiscal Year ’17 to Fiscal Year ’18.

“These rate increases represent a historic investment in our early education workforce, which in combination with other initiatives and policy reforms, lays a strong foundation for meaningful quality improvements in this crucial sector of our education system,” **said Education Secretary James Peyser.**

“With today’s announcement, the Commonwealth moves one step closer to universal access to high quality early education services. The Senate has long prioritized funding to expand access to those services, as well as supporting efforts to boost quality and rates,” **said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst).** “There are few items in the state budget where the return on investment is as great as early education and care services.”

“Teachers are at the heart of a high-quality early education and care system,” **said Early Education and Care Commissioner Tom Weber.** “I am thrilled that the Department is able to make this important progress to help early education programs provide better compensation for our workforce and recognize their important work and valuable contribution to our Commonwealth.”

“Promoting children’s healthy development starts with investing in the adults who care for them,” **said Board of Early Education and Care Chair Nonie Lesaux.** “We know from decades of research that rich, rigorous, and fun learning opportunities are more likely when educators are well-trained and are able to stay and grow in their professional roles. This rate increase is an essential investment in those who are so vital to the Commonwealth’s youngest citizens.”

“The tentative agreement reached by our union SEIU Local 509 and the Baker-Polito administration is a positive step forward in our fight for fair wages and quality training for all individuals in our state,” **said President of SEIU Local 509 Peter MacKinnon.** “I am proud of the work that our union has done to secure a contract that directly invests and supports our educators and families of the commonwealth while also developing the workforce. We would like to thank the Department of Early Education and Care in working with us to reach this tentative agreement and are especially grateful to the Commonwealth's leadership -- Governor Baker, Speaker DeLeo, Senate President Rosenberg, and the entire Legislature -- for making early education, and those that provide it, a priority.”

“These funds will help programs attract and retain qualified educators, which will help ensure

that children receive high-quality early education and care," **said William Eddy, Executive Director, Massachusetts Early Care and Education.** "On behalf of the early educators in the Commonwealth, I thank the Baker-Polito Administration and the Department of Early Education and Care for their leadership and critical investment in our educators, families, and future."

The new funding will extend the 3.6 percent rate increase to state-subsidized family child care programs, who are represented by the Service International Employees' Union Local 509 (SEIU 509). Earlier this year, center-based early education and care programs received a 3.6 percent increase in reimbursement rates.

Funding for these initiatives is available due to the full implementation of the state's Child Care Financial Assistance System (CCFA), a new technology platform for managing \$500 million awarded annually in early education and care subsidies

CCFA provides improved accuracy for verifying subsidy eligibility through real-time data validation at each step of the award process and stricter enforcement of financial assistance policies and regulations. All subsidized care providers are required to use CCFA for documenting subsidy eligibility, authorizing awards, reporting child attendance, and submitting billing requests to the Department of Early Education and Care.

Currently the state subsidizes approximately 4,200 early education and care programs to provide high-quality care at minimal - or no-cost for families who are low-income, or in-need of assistance. Collectively, the subsidies provided to these programs support the enrollment of approximately 56,000 children daily. The funding for the subsidized child care programs is provided through the state budget and is administered by the Department of Early Education and Care.

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